

Dear Mother Earth

AN Earthly Advice column

**Sometimes, everyone (even Antarctica)
needs a little help . . .**

Dear Mother Earth,

It's me, Antarctica. You know, the Pole down south? I have the subzero temperatures, glaciers, ice, penguins, seals, whales, birds, and scientists. I also have some problems. Here are a couple of them:

Problem #1—I'm melting. Okay, so I'm not melting right away. But things could get messy, that is if your temperature keeps rising. The burning of fossil fuels, like coal and oil, increases the amount of CO₂ (carbon dioxide) in the atmosphere. Trees and plants absorb CO₂, but large forest areas are being cut or burned down to make room for farmland and buildings. More CO₂ is being produced than the atmosphere can absorb. As the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere increases, the greenhouse effect becomes stronger and Earth's temperature rises. This global warming could melt some of my ice. This could cause your sea level to rise and many coastal cities to flood!

Problem #2—Hole-y Cow! There's a hole in Earth's ozone layer. The ozone layer protects everything from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. And the hole is right above me! CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) have caused the hole. CFCs came from chemicals once used in aerosol cans, Styrofoam, and air conditioners. CFCs escape into the atmosphere and make their way to the Antarctic. The resulting ozone hole allows harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun to reach the Earth's surface.

Too much ultraviolet radiation could reduce the number of shrimplike krill in the ocean. This is a problem because Antarctic animals eat krill. Without krill, lots of these animals won't have enough to eat. And, if they die, the animals that eat them won't have enough to eat either.

South Poley Yours, Antarctica



Dear Antarctica:

Mother Earth can only do so much. People on Earth must help. Scientists are working to help you with these problems. There are also other things Earth people can do:

—Use less energy! Fossil fuels power your family's car and produce much of the world's electricity. You can save energy by taking the bus, riding your bike, or walking.

—Recycle cans, bottles, and newspapers. When you recycle, you send less trash to the landfill and you help save the natural resources, like trees.

—Plant trees! This is a fun and easy way to reduce greenhouse gases. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the air.

—Get involved. Read more about Antarctica. Find out what scientists are doing to protect the ozone layer. Think about what you can do to help.

Love, Mother Earth

**Adapted from an article by Patricia J. Murphy
Illustrated by Beth Stover**